



News Release

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UCAN Encourages Sunscreen as a Back-to-School Essential *Back to School – does your child have sunscreen?*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Utah Cancer Action Network (UCAN) and The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) are urging parents and students to include sunscreen when buying back-to-school supplies in order to reduce children's risk for skin cancer. Utah is ranked among the top ten highest states in the nation for melanoma cases, and skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the state. Utah's high altitude, predominantly fair-complexioned population and frequent sunny days combine to put Utahns at higher risk for skin cancer.

"Many outdoor school-related activities take place during the fall such as sports, marching band, recess, PE and field trips," said Kalynn Filion, health program specialist, UDOH. "Because students spend so many hours outside during the hottest time of the day we are encouraging parents to view sunscreen as an essential school supply."

Students can protect themselves by applying sunscreen, with an SPF of 15 or higher, 30 minutes before participating in outdoor activities and re-applying every two hours. Other sun protection includes avoiding the sun during the hottest hours of the day between 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.; covering up by wearing hats, long sleeves and sunglasses; and seeking shade whenever possible.

"We hope applying sunscreen becomes as common as water breaks during outdoor school activities," said Filion. UCAN and the UDOH encourage parents and students to get involved in sun safety measures by:

- Promoting sun safety in school assemblies, back to school night or other events that reach staff, students and parents.

- Reinforcing sun safety policies and practices through posters, newsletters, the Web, parent-teacher meetings and student/teacher activities.
- Serving on the school's/district's school health council or team.
- Contacting the local health department to see what they can do in their school.
- Urging their school's parent-teacher association to advocate for sun safety policies and practices such as ensuring that the dress code allows students to wear hats when outdoors.
- Developing partnerships to help support environmental improvements such as adding trees to school property.

In addition, teachers and school administrators can promote sun safety by: encouraging students to wear a hat, sunscreen and sunglasses (as school policies permit) when participating in outdoor activities; taking advantage of free online curriculums such as the EPA's *Sunwise* Program; and enhancing the school's physical environment by choosing locations with shade for outdoor activities.

Skin cancer has been declared the nation's silent epidemic by the American Academy of Dermatology because more than half of all new cancers are skin cancers. The annual rate of melanoma in the U.S. is increasing by three percent each year, which is faster than most other cancers. This information and other important tips and links to skin cancer prevention Web sites are available at www.ucan.cc, or by calling 1-888-222-2542.

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